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AWAKENED CHINA.¹

ASIA has ever excited the curiosity and ambition of mankind. At once the cradle of the human race and the treasury of riches whose enormous proportions are proverbial, this continent is the last to be exploited by the pushing, alert States of the West. Perhaps if the bold voyagers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had not stumbled upon the New World in their efforts to discover a shorter route to the East, the tide of European migration would have long ago been diverted in the direction toward which the eyes of every thoughtful statesman of the world are at this very moment turned. Be that as it may, that part of the world which first saw not only the human race, but also the faint glimmerings of intellectual and religious life, will for many years to come be the theater of world-wide historical events. That those events, moreover, are bound to affect most profoundly the destiny of mankind is too obvious for comment. And they will do this quite as much by recalling the past as by a direct appeal to the potent influences of present commercial and political ambitions.

Now of all Asia, China is for many reasons the land of promise to every Western power, whether the activities of that power in external affairs be prompted by ideas of territorial aggrandizement merely or by the more material aims born of modern industrial conditions. Of vast territorial extent and with a population which may be roughly stated to be five times that of the United States, China has immense latent potentialities. Its people are civilized. Its mineral resources are limitless, and only require wealth and intelligent direction to make them yield enough to supply the wants of the whole world. Add to these advantages an extensive coast, mighty rivers, and a most varied climate, and some

¹ "China in Transformation." By Archibald Colquhoun. 8vo., 397 pages. Harper & Brothers, New York and London, 1898.

clue may be found to the present attention China is receiving. Not that the country has been but recently discovered. The world has never lost sight of it. Was it not known to the nations of classical antiquity? Was it not the theme of every traveler of the Middle Ages who set out for Cathay? And long after Marco Polo had fired the imagination of every European by his descriptions of a people who were so unlike the Westerners, were not the rulers and subjects of Christendom ready to believe anything told them of the fabulous riches and marvelous enlightenment of that strange and happy race who lived far across the seas? Century succeeded century, however, and "the Middle Kingdom," ruled by the "Son of Heaven," was practically unknown to the Occident; for, notwithstanding the occasional visits of explorers and the prolonged residence of missionaries, little serious attention was paid the possibilities of the country. Even after the Anglo-Franco war against China, nearly half a century ago, the Western powers gained few advantages further than the opening of some ports to commerce and the right of sending ambassadors to Peking. Meantime the acquisition of Hongkong by Great Britain, the commencement of Chinese immigration to America and other regions, and the augmenting influence of the Mongolian trade helped to whet curiosity respecting a country whose population seemed capable of doing almost anything at all. Subsequently French aggressions in Tonquin, almost twenty years ago, intensified the latent interest in China; but the smoldering flax burst into flames when by the treaty of Shimonoseki, in 1895, this huge empire lay at the feet of plucky little Japan. In the short war which this peace concluded, China's weakness was revealed to an astounded world, and every one foresaw its speedy collapse. Russia, France, and Germany saw their opportunity and immediately seized it. Japan was informed that her demands must be modified, that she must not retain possession of any part of the mainland, and that China's friends would see fair play. Hence the Japanese forces reluctantly withdrew and the world was not kept long in darkness.

It is well to bear in mind the fact that, in the exploitation of China, Russia and France betray a policy altogether different from that of either Great Britain or Germany. France and Russia are bent on territorial aggrandizement and political power rather than on that commercial development which sways the somewhat occult diplomacy of Germany and Great Britain. Russia, through consummate skill in management, has peacefully acquired paramount influence in China. The Tsar's magic name is all-powerful in the capital of the Flowery Kingdom. Curiously enough, indeed, Russia barely waited for the withdrawal of the victorious army of Japan—robbed of the substantial fruits of its triumph—before she pounced upon Port Arthur and the adjacent peninsula. Her pretext was an outlet on the Pacific free from ice. Russia, be it remembered, had known how to draw upon the financial resources of France during the peace negotiations between Japan and China. The latter's reward of this friendship came quickly in the form of momentous commercial, industrial, and mining privileges to Russia, including a right of way for the great trans-Siberian railroad, now building. Not only has Russia secured Port Arthur for ninety-nine years; but the Russo-Chinese treaty, recently brought to light, shows the earmarks of that adept Muscovite diplomat, Count Cassini, now Russian ambassador to Washington. By the elastic articles of this celebrated convention, the Tsar obtained overshadowing rights throughout Northern China. And now the mask that has hitherto concealed the real terminus of the Siberian railway has been cast aside. Instead of being headed for Vladivostok, as Russian engineering maps have hitherto informed us, it is already on its way across Manchuria and pointed in the direction of a far better-known place than Vladivostok. No less important is the fact that the fate of Manchuria, with its teeming population and rare material resources, will be that of more than one region of Asia which first became a Cossack camp and ended as a Russian province. Feeble China may squirm, but what can she do? Is not the Russian paw firmly planted on her sacred soil? And did

not that same paw drive out the Japanese and put upon a skeptical market the bonds by which the war debt was paid?

Now if Manchuria were a barren wilderness peopled by nomadic barbarians, the outside world would feel little interest in its ultimate fate. But Manchuria is not a wilderness, nor are its inhabitants barbarians unmindful of the value of foreign trade. With a climate which is said closely to resemble that of Canada and blessed with a soil which travelers tell us is well adapted to farming purposes, Manchuria has one of the most industrious populations on earth. Her vast forests, her undeveloped mines, and her industrial prospects generally, unite in making the region a most promising one. It is also to be borne in mind that it was from Manchuria that the Manchu-Tartars in the seventeenth century came to the aid of Tsung-Ching, the last sovereign of the Ming dynasty. Many will recall the story. Hard pressed by a rebel army, the emperor, in his hour of need, made the fatal mistake of summoning foreign aid; for the Manchurians, like the Anglo-Saxons, remained in the land to which they had been called, and became its masters. Seizing Peking, they raised to the imperial throne a son of the Manchu ruler; and although a period of confusion was the sequel to this act of usurpation, the fitful resistance of the Chinese grew ever weaker and weaker. So the shaved head and pigtail, badges of Tartar sovereignty, became permanent features in the life of the people; and in spite of countless rebellions the Manchu dynasty has ever since maintained its supremacy in China. For historic reasons, therefore, Russian absorption of Manchuria seems to point to a yet greater prestige for her in China, and the extension across Manchuria of the wonderful Russian transcontinental railway will surely give rise to fresh dangers not only to China but to the peace of the world.

As is well known, this road is one of the marvels of the age. Its near completion has precipitated not a few of the burning questions of the far East. Its length will be more than twice that of any of our vaunted Pacific lines, and its cost will of course run into the hundreds of millions. Hence its comple-

tion in the near future will represent not only one of the greatest triumphs of engineering skill; but its social, political, and economic effects will approach those produced by the discovery of America. One striking military feature of this road is the fact that Russia will soon be able to transport, during a considerable portion of the year, both troops and war material to the Pacific. At present the ice-covered regions of the north render such a mobilization of the army well-nigh impossible; but by means of the magnificently equipped road which is now being constructed, Russia will be able to hurry her troops to the far East on a grand trunk line every mile of whose track will be virtually on Russian territory. But this grand march to the sea is not the result of a sudden inspiration of genius, for back of it lies a past which has its full share of interest and importance. Mr. Clarence Cary, of the New York bar, who recently visited China, has written these words in regard to this great project: "A powerful, homogeneous people like the Russians, numbering many millions, and imbued with modern aims and ideas, cannot be forever restrained by political barriers, however skillfully contrived; and it has ever seen steadfastly in the East and on the far Pacific a star of destiny and promise. Finding, therefore, the expected outlet by way of Constantinople hopelessly lost at the end of the hard-fought war of 1877-78 with Turkey, because of the diplomatic complications of the Berlin conference, Russia looked again to the East." Here the Fates smiled on the Tsar, and a series of triumphs have brought the Russian arms to the frontiers of the Anglo-Indian empire's buffer-state of Afghanistan. By this move Russia will probably be able to checkmate her old antagonist, England. Russia holds England responsible for many a cruel disappointment. Then again, the Japanese-Chinese war, as we have seen above, came just in time for the great power of the North to reap the advantages which should have accrued to Japan. By seizing Port Arthur and wresting numerous valuable concessions from terror-stricken China, Russia has not only added greatly to her strength, but has also increased her prestige throughout the East.

Of Germany's designs upon China the world is not ignorant. Several years ago the *Berliner Neuste Nachrichten*, Prince Bismarck's organ, is said to have employed these significant words: "The German empire must be either a world empire or a second-class power. But to assert itself a world empire it must resolutely act upon this fundamental principle, that no further distribution of territory among European powers can be allowed to take place anywhere without such compensation to Germany as shall maintain the existing balance of power." Then went up the cry from one end of the country to the other that Germany was tired of witnessing the spectacle of the other powers dividing among themselves the earth and leaving to Germany the sky. The policy thus foreshadowed indicated that the fatherland, in spite of the rather barren experiments in Africa, had realized that the day for expanding was at hand and that the imperial idea was to dominate the future foreign policy of the emperor. That the commercial classes, moreover, were in thorough accord with the ideas of the military and political authorities becomes apparent enough when we take into consideration the clamor that went up from the various guilds and other trade organizations from one end of the land to the other. The refrain of that great chorus was: "Germany should not lose the opportunity for adding to her own territory; and unless she acts promptly, the Eastern trade will be lost to her." Meantime influences were at work which no earthly sovereign could counteract, and they were destined to strengthen the Kaiser's hand sufficiently to enable him to win the game. It seems that a little more than a year ago two German Roman Catholic missionaries were murdered in Shantung. Coming soon after an insult to the German flag, the German squadron under Admiral von Diedrichs proceeded in the direction of the scene of the outrage and seized Kiaochau. There was a general outcry, of course; but Emperor William is not only pious but he is also brave, and the more he reflected on the wickedness of the Chinese the heavier became his demands. Indeed, if the process of absorption continues—and there is every reason for believing

that it will continue—Germany will soon become owner of the entire rich province of Shantung, with a population almost equal to that of Germany itself. Already Germany has secured important trade and railway concessions, and, in spite of her denials, her sphere of influence is ever widening. She has also secured Kiao-Chau Bay for ninety-nine years, and furthermore won from China an agreement by whose terms nothing shall be done within a radius of thirty-one English miles near the bay without the consent of the German authorities.

France is no stranger to China. This is a painful truth to the latter country. As previously mentioned, France was England's ally almost fifty years ago, if not in the opium, certainly in the audience controversy, and only a few years since the French republic engaged in a costly struggle on its own account in Tonquin. Meanwhile the tri-color has floated over an ever-increasing stretch of Chinese territory until to-day France owns practically all of Cochin-China, Tonquin, Anam, and a large part of Siam; and already Gallic ambition is casting longing glances at the island of Hainan. Under such circumstances, it was only natural that France should have endeavored to reap her share of the rich gleanings which remained in Chinese fields after the Japanese war. Hence, through the active coöperation of Russia, she has obtained important concessions from the Tsung-li-Yamen or foreign office of the Chinese empire. In the first place, China has promised to employ only French industry and commerce in operating her mines in Yunnan and Kwang Tung, to say nothing of the railway privileges Frenchmen have obtained in Southern China generally.

Great Britain has naturally watched these kaleidoscopic changes with growing interest and alarm; and, owing either to fear or to stupidity, Lord Salisbury has been obliged to change front more than once. Singularly enough, each time he has shifted his position he has rubbed his hands gleefully and chirped of a victory few besides himself have been able to discern. It would be a mistake, however, to fancy that England has played a losing game, despite the fact that folly appears to have been her counsel. Still, Great Britain in her

struggle in China must of necessity receive the hearty and substantial support of the entire commercial world, and more especially that of America, for in China at least the interests of the two countries are virtually identical. Nor should it be forgotten that Great Britain was one of the first countries to compel China to throw open her ports to the "foreign devils," and whatever concessions the English have obtained they have shared with all other nations. It will be remembered that England secured Hongkong as far back as 1841, since which time foreigners entering that port have enjoyed all the privileges of British subjects. Merchants of all nationalities have been allowed to come and go with the utmost freedom. Therefore when the integrity of China was first seriously menaced, Great Britain, in view of her vast commercial interests, boldly announced a sort of Monroe doctrine for the quaking empire. China, a sovereign and independent state, was not to be regarded as a field for European exploitation or colonization. England, with her extensive East Indian possessions, not to mention her preponderating commercial interests, greater probably than those of the rest of the world combined, was visibly startled by the sudden turn of affairs in the Orient. No less rude was the shock she received on realizing that she stood face to face with a combined and hostile Europe. What now would be the consequences were the very ports into which the commercial fleets of the whole world sailed, through her influence, suddenly closed by her commercial and political rivals? All Britain was convulsed. The doors to China must be kept open. The air was thick with rumors of war. Finally on March 1 last the House of Commons, with singular unanimity, passed the following measure: "*Resolved*, That it is of vital importance for British commerce and influence that the independence of Chinese territory should be maintained." All the public utterances of her politicians indicated, as plainly as anything could indicate, that come what may, Great Britain's policy was to be along these lines. Such was the notice served on the continental powers. They only laughed in their sleeves.

Blunt Sir Michael Hicks-Beach thereupon went so far as to make use of that word which diplomatic usage has rendered obsolete in the vocabulary of all civilized foreign offices. Expectation ran high. Flying squadrons received all sorts of mysterious orders. Coal was in demand. The stock market quivered with excitement. Suddenly there came a change of front as complete as that brought about a few years ago by President Cleveland's firm attitude on the Venezuelan controversy. Finding that Russia and her allies were not to be intimidated by threats unworthy of a great nation unless promptly executed, the British lion became as harmless as a bird of St. Francis. Lancashire cloth regained its normal price. The stock market was composed. And it now seems that the court of St. James—as far as one can make out anything there—realizes that nothing can save the huge rotten Asiatic thing that calls itself an empire from its impending doom; that, owing to external and internal agencies equally irresistible in their nature, it is already moribund, and that, so far from striving to arrest the downfall of China, the British government has taken the position it should have occupied months ago—namely, that England should endeavor to secure her share of the fragments. Hence she has joined the flock of vultures circling over the great carcass.

Already, therefore, Great Britain has gained several important advantages. First of all, she has succeeded in retaining Sir Robert Hart in the all-important office of Commissioner of the Imperial Customs. To show the importance of this post it may be remarked that all goods imported into China are subject to an imperial tariff of some five per cent. In addition to this tariff there is a *likin*, or internal transit tax, levied on all goods bound for the interior of China—a tax collected every few miles by the petty officials of various provinces and dependencies. As is well known, this imperial tariff was several years ago mortgaged to secure European loans, notably the Anglo-German, and has been subsequently pledged to secure the payment of the Japanese indemnity. Owing to recent monetary disturbances, the imperial customs have declined considerably in

gold valuation, and it was to prevail upon the Western powers to consent to its increase that caused Li Hung Chang, the Chinese statesman, to pay his recent unsuccessful visit to Europe and the United States. Hence the position of Sir Robert is a most delicate one, and it is one which he has filled with both grace and ability. Russia, to be sure, has frequently endeavored to have him turned out of office, but has so far failed in her efforts. England has also received liberal concessions in the valley of the Yang-tse-Kiang river, a navigable stream which in size and importance may be compared to the Mississippi. Furthermore she has succeeded in having several more ports thrown open to foreign trade and in obtaining a lease of Wei-Hai-Wei for ninety-nine years. Military experts express the opinion that this is a valuable strategic position and gives England the command of the Pe-chi-li gulf.

From the foregoing it will be gathered that the powers directly interested in China are Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain, and Japan. Belgium and Holland are also affected by the serious alterations now going on in the constitution of the Celestial Empire, not to mention the interests of our own country. But the country least considered is China itself. That she is sure to play a great rôle, however, in the events foreshadowed by contemporary occurrences within her boundaries can scarcely be doubted in view of the extraordinary genius and vitality of her heterogeneous population. Accordingly it would be extremely unwise to leave this people out of the reckoning in any effort to forecast the future either of Asia or of the world at large. The significant fact must be grasped at once that China, after years of repose, has suddenly become aroused. Like an awakening giant, she may one day stretch out her limbs and surprise everybody. And in view of the inherent genius of the people China may yet produce some startling changes in human history. We must not forget the extraordinary development of Japan. Is China one whit the less capable? Therefore a book like that written by Mr. Archibald Colquhoun comes at a most seasonable time. Mr. Archibald Colquhoun is

moreover singularly well fortified for the performance of his task. He tells us that he has not only seen many years' service in Burma, but has also paid frequent visits to Siam and made "prolonged stays in China as explorer, special correspondent of the [London] *Times*, and recently in connection with important railway questions."

Every page of this really valuable work bears witness to the author's thoroughly accurate knowledge of the country and people he so felicitously describes. Beginning with an account of Chinese geography, Mr. Colquhoun gives a rapid survey of the topography of the eighteen provinces of China, with their numerous mountain and river systems, which have so remarkably influenced the institutions of the yellow race. Much stress of course is laid on the foreign relations of China, while several chapters are devoted respectively to the economic, social, and political aspects of the far Eastern question. Nor has our author ignored Chinese institutions. A highly encouraging chapter, for example, is devoted to the influence exerted by the Chinese press, while a no less optimistic account is given of Chinese democracy. Referring to this latter phase of the subject, our author says: "Of the contributory causes of a national vitality which has vanquished all conquerors, certainly not the least interesting is the faculty of local self-government which runs in the Chinese blood. While it may help to prevent the development of nationality in its wide sense, this quality of the race keeps alive the constituents of nationality in separate small communities, and in a form as indestructible as protoplasm, which cannot in fact be broken up except by extermination. Or they may be likened to an infinite multitude of water-tight cells, which keep the whole mass afloat in the most turbulent sea. And supplementing the family and village groups which lie at the bottom of the national life, which are rooted in the soil and have their fixed rallying points visible to the public eye, are an indefinite number of other groupings—special, variable, not territorially attached—which are the spontaneous outcome of felt needs wherein professions, classes, interests, and aims form the organic pivot. . . . The

rights of the people are primarily the possession of their land, freedom of industry and trade, and the control of their local affairs." These two great systems, a centralized autocracy and a democratic self-government, recall the Russian constitution.

Naturally enough, the most interesting chapters of this volume are those which discuss the political question from an international point of view. Like many other Englishmen, Mr. Colquhoun takes a pessimistic view of British diplomacy in Asia. He frankly admits that as against Russia it has been a failure. "What is wanted on our side," he sorrowfully asserts, "is a plan solidly backed, and a man. Instead, we have trusted to phrases and have lived on illusions. But how can there be any plan when our government has no real intelligence department, when it is uninformed? How dare we entertain the idea of force, when we shun the responsibility attaching to alliances, and while our only idea of strengthening ourselves is to multiply the number of our war vessels? And under such a system how can we expect to have efficient agents? In the one field, where of late years we have been successful—Egypt—we had our plan: we had the twelve thousand bayonets, and the man. In China we have never had the three, and seldom even the last. How few are the Cromers, the Nicholsons, the Sandemans in the service of Britain! It is not that she cannot produce them—no country in the world has them in such profusion—but that the system—or rather the want of system—does not tolerate, still less encourage, them. The diplomatist, the frontier officer, is ever afraid of being disavowed, has always to think of the 'question in the House.' And how can it be otherwise with the feeling abroad that British governments are seldom strong, are seldom firm and consistent, and are only too ready to sacrifice a scapegoat?"

Mr. Colquhoun is inclined to think that the position of Russia with regard to China is not generally realized. Russia, he affirms, herself semi-Asiatic, thoroughly understands how to deal with an Asiatic government and make herself feared. The Russian spokesmen claim, continues our au-

thor, that "they are working for civilization—not for Russia alone, but for the whole of Europe; and we are assured that as soon as Russia is strong enough to declare free trade, she will do it. There is no need to express doubt of the sincerity of such professions. But they are only to be understood on the hypothesis that Russia seriously contemplates an eventual supreme domination, which, once firmly established, would enable her to deal with all the powers of Europe as generously as, for instance, she is now doing with France. Russia poses in Europe as the 'bulwark of Christianity' against the 'yellow peril;' while in China she is the 'protector' of her next kinsman against the wave of Western aggression. This doctrine (the pro-Asiatic) is preached with as great ability and persistency at Peking as is the other (the pro-European) doctrine in England, through the press, with the view to influence public opinion."

Mr. Colquhoun makes more than one allusion to the interests of the United States in China. And well may he do so, for some one has truly enough observed that the far East is our near West. A glance at the map will show this. So rapid, moreover, has been our territorial expansion that our population has long since reached the Pacific and is already firmly fixed in Hawaii, not to mention the influence we are sure to gain in the Philippines and other groups by reason of the war with Spain. Hence it is of supreme importance that our already rapidly developing trade with China be unmolested. Our many smokeless furnaces and silent engines proclaim the fact that our industrial establishments produce more than the home market requires, and that America's prosperity in the future demands that new markets be found and old ones kept open. The various treaties we have made with China provide, moreover, that China will accord us whatever privileges she grants to others. So far, the present administration has expressed its intention of enforcing these rights, and we have heard a great deal of an American-English-Japanese alliance. Naturally enough, too, our geographical situation with respect to China, as well as the number of American vessels annually visiting her ports, will

lead to a yet greater commerce in the near future. In these days of rapid transit the six thousand and more miles between California and China do not offer a serious obstacle to travel or trade, while, despite the passage by Congress of the Chinese Exclusion Bill, our relations with the Flowery Kingdom are extremely satisfactory.

As to what the future has in store for China time alone can tell. The war with Japan thoroughly aroused her slumbering millions. Under a stronger government—possibly that of Russia—and solidified by improved means of communication, China will unquestionably more and more yield to the uplifting and strengthening forces of Western civilization. Her latent mineral wealth, her virgin forests, her many navigable lakes and rivers, her huge manufacturing cities, her exhaustless agricultural lands, her millions of buyers and sellers, are all awaiting the guidance of the white man. That China's long stagnation, moreover, has in large measure been the result of a defective system of intercommunication is a fact as patent as that her frequent and awful famines may be traced to the same cause. What is to be the effect on her population and institutions when they come in direct contact with the complicated manifestations of European life? To what greatness may not China hope to attain when her people shall have mastered not only the white man's peaceful arts but his military and moral methods as well? On the ruins of the now rapidly passing Celestial Empire may there not rise a strong and vigorous state? Sheng-Tajen, the suave and efficient director of the Chinese imperial railways, has but to say that his age-long torpid country, with its 5,000,000 square miles and 400,000,000 inhabitants—not to speak of its 2,500 miles of seacoast dotted with harbors—can no longer remain satisfied with its few hundred miles of railways. Eager capitalists are already on the march. The "yellow peril" of men like the late Professor Pearson may either never be a danger at all or it may be so remote as to furnish no ground for serious apprehension. A China civilized and enlightened may after all prove less dangerous than the colossal jelly fish that now attracts the squadrons of

Europe. Hence an industrially advanced China may after all prove as much of a bugaboo as a militant China, unified by railways, marching under a yellow Napoleon against the panic-seized white race of the West. That the world is to be turned topsy-turvy by any such catastrophe few can really seriously believe, although not a few may be inclined to concede that this extraordinary race, united or disunited, is sure to play its part in the drama of history. What that rôle is to be only a prophet would venture to say. This much, however, may be reasonably predicted. The future actions of the yellow race will in no small measure be affected by the present actions of the white race.

In concluding we should not neglect to draw attention to the excellent maps which accompany Mr. Colquhoun's enjoyable book. There is also a carefully prepared index. Those, moreover, who wish still further to extend their researches in this direction will find a most helpful bibliography at the end of the volume, embracing English, French, and German authorities. Few will perhaps complain that no references are made to Chinese authorities. It were perhaps ungracious to refer to the venial fault of several errors on the part of the printer, which a subsequent edition will correct. Any one who wishes to post himself thoroughly on the great and living questions which our author's book suggests cannot do better than to read the truly graphic and at times brilliant descriptions this volume contains. B. J. RAMAGE.